



St Augustine Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 117438
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290835
Inspection dates 12–13 October 2006
Reporting inspector Anne Kounnou

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Riversmead
School category	Voluntary aided		Hoddesdon
Age range of pupils	3–11		Hertfordshire EN11 8DP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01992 463549
Number on roll (school)	247	Fax number	01992 446263
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr T Forn
		Headteacher	Mrs E Plunkett
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized Roman Catholic primary school that is oversubscribed. About a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, and the majority of these pupils are Italian. A small proportion of this group, are learning to speak English as an additional language. When most children start school their attainment is broadly in line with that expected for their age. Fewer pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities than is typical and the proportion entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The school has recently renewed its Investor in People Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where, unusually for a primary school, pupils are taught three modern languages. This is an outstanding feature of the good curriculum which meets the pupils' needs well. School leaders give the highest priority to raising standards and improving achievement for all pupils in a caring environment. The school has an accurate view of its own effectiveness and provides good value for money. Many parents praise the welcoming and caring atmosphere that pervades the school. Two parents wrote separately, 'The staff are always helpful and ready to give advice and support.' In recent years, pupils reached average standards in Year 6 national tests and made satisfactory progress. The headteacher and governors have been vigilant in pursuing higher standards in English, mathematics and science. Standards are now above average and pupils achieve well throughout the school. In Years 1 and 2, pupils have been making good progress for some years, reaching well above average standards. In the Nursery and Reception classes the quality of education is good. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection and all the children now make good progress. Strong teamwork and good leadership and management lie behind all the developments. Improvement throughout the school has been underpinned by the introduction of good assessment procedures in English, mathematics and science, and teachers' meticulous marking. Regular assessment makes clear which individuals are making the progress they should, and identifies those who are falling behind. Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings in analysing the wealth of data collected. In particular, there is no rigorous comparison of the rate of progress that different groups of pupils make as they move through the school. Consequently, pupils learning to speak English as an additional language continue to make only satisfactory progress. Pupils behave well all around the school and are unfailingly polite. Their smart appearance reflects their good attitudes to school. The high level of supervision maintains excellent order but limits the amount of initiative and independence that pupils develop, both in their lessons and in their personal and social skills. Care for pupils is satisfactory and the school has due regard to their well-being. Teachers' high expectations result in challenging learning targets that have recently been shared with pupils. At the moment, the targets are not referred to regularly and pupils are not fully familiar with them. Nor are they shared with pupils' parents. Consequently, pupils do not know exactly what they need to do to improve their work and parents do not know how to help.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve school systems for checking how well all the different groups of pupils are progressing, to ensure that all groups make equally good progress.
- Ensure that all pupils know what they need to do to reach their targets and share this information with parents.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to organise themselves, work independently, and take personal responsibility for their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. This is an improvement for the older pupils. Over the last few years their achievement has been satisfactory and standards reached at the end of Year 6 were average. School leaders have worked tirelessly to improve the rate of progress that pupils make from Year 3 to Year 6. The result is that pupils' achievement is now good overall. The school's challenging targets have largely been met and have been exceeded at the higher level. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 consistently reach higher than average standards. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make much better progress than they did at the time of the last inspection. They all achieve well now and the majority reach or exceed the levels expected for their age. The few pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive well-targeted support in lessons that ensures they achieve well. The group of pupils learning to speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress and reach the targets set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils have a good appreciation of the culture of pupils from other European countries, but their understanding of other cultures represented in British society is more limited. All parents agree that their children enjoy school, and consider behaviour to be good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school but there are few opportunities for them to use their initiative and develop personal responsibility. Nonetheless, the school council and school prefects are proud of their good contribution to school life, 'We asked if we could set up a Confidence Club, and everyone really likes it'. Pupils enjoy lessons and other activities. One parent wrote, 'My son loves to go to school and moans when the weekend comes.' Year 6 pupils are especially enthusiastic about their planned residential visit. Despite this, attendance is broadly average, largely because of holidays taken during term time. Pupils know how to stay healthy and safe and good specialist teaching of physical education is helping them achieve healthy lifestyles. Pupils are well-prepared for the economic realities of future life. Each class has been challenged to 'invest' a twenty five pound fund and raise as much as they can for charity by the end of the year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use assessment well and tailor lessons to meet pupils' needs. The most able are stretched really well. About a third of pupils in Year 6 are already reaching higher levels than expected for their age. Teachers' marking

is exceptionally good and gives pupils simple guidance so that they know exactly what they are doing well and how to improve their work. The good system for assessment in English, mathematics and science does not extend to the whole curriculum and this limits teachers' understanding of pupils' progress in all subjects. At the start of lessons teachers explain what pupils will learn and share a short list of things to look for in their work when they have finished. This is particularly helpful as pupils can check whether or not they have succeeded. Many lessons include opportunities for children to talk to one another about their work. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and decide how to work things out for themselves. Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons for those with learning difficulties and disabilities helping them to learn well. A specialist teacher provides appropriate support for those learning to speak English as an additional language. In lessons across the curriculum there is a clear focus on developing pupils' English vocabulary, but there are not enough checks to find out how successful this is for pupils who are learning to speak the language.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum that is enriched well. The most exceptional feature is the wide range of modern languages that are taught, including Italian from Year 1. The Italian culture of many pupils is reflected throughout the school. However, pupils learning to speak English as an additional language do not make as much progress as other groups because the curriculum has not been adapted sufficiently to meet their needs. Specialist teaching for physical education is particularly enjoyable and successful for pupils who are increasing their sports skills well. The science curriculum is challenging and fun because it provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to find out things for themselves. In other subjects these opportunities are more limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff know pupils well and are fully committed to their well-being. Procedures are in place for safeguarding pupils. However, some risk assessments are not sufficiently rigorous to identify all the potential hazards. A strong, welcoming, Catholic ethos permeates the school. Parents particularly appreciate the effect this has on pupils' personal development. One wrote, 'My child left school feeling confident, happy and high-spirited.' Good relationships with the local Catholic secondary school play a significant part in pupils' good achievement in science. Pupils have recently been given targets to meet in English and mathematics. At the moment they are not fully familiar with them, nor are they shared with parents, so that the targets have not begun to make a difference to pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Governors provide an excellent level of challenge to senior staff and focus on improving standards. All school leaders work well as a team and are determined to raise pupils' achievement further. The school has an accurate view of its own effectiveness. The headteacher, governors and senior staff know what is working effectively and what needs to improve. Nonetheless, the wealth of information gathered through regular assessments is not analysed well. There are no rigorous checks to see how well some groups are doing in comparison to others. This limits school leaders' understanding of how to raise achievement for pupils learning to speak English as an additional language because it has not accurately identified the reasons for their slower progress. Despite this, there is good capacity for further improvement. Demonstrable improvement has been secured in English, mathematics and science standards in Years 3 to 6, and the quality of education in the Foundation Stage is much improved since the last inspection.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 October 2006 Dear Pupils St Augustine Roman Catholic Primary School, Riversmead, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire. EN11 8DP Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school. You make good progress because this is a good school. Your school prefects and the new school council told us that it is a very friendly school and you have to work hard. Your headteacher, the governors and all the staff work very well together and are making your school even better. Here are the things that we think are best about your school: - Your school is bright and welcoming. - You behave very well, look very smart and are always polite to adults. - Teachers explain what you are going to learn in your lessons and tell you how check if you have succeeded. They mark your books extremely well and this helps you to make good progress. - All the children from Year 1 learn to speak Italian, and older children learn Spanish and French as well. These are the things that we think could be better: - Some children do not make as much progress as others. Governors and teachers need to check carefully to find out why, so that everyone can make good progress. - Make sure that all of you know what you need to learn next to reach your targets and share this information with your parents. You could help the teachers by telling them when you think you have reached your targets. - The adults help you a lot and you don't have enough opportunities to make your own decisions, or to organise your own work. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you. Yours faithfully Liz Kounnou Lead Inspector